COLLAPSIBLE CONTAINER

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a continuation of co-pending application Serial No. 09/698,654 filed October 28, 2000, now U.S. Patent No. 6,631,822

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TECHNICAL FIELD

This invention relates to a collapsible container adaptable for the storing and transporting produce items and other goods.

BACKGROUND ART

Plastic containers and crates are commonly used today to transport and store a variety of items. When in use, such containers are typically rectangular in shape and have a base surrounded by four upstanding side panels. When not in use, many of the plastic containers employed by the produce and food industries have panels which are capable of folding both outwardly and inwardly. The folding feature, and particularly the inwardly folding feature, allows the containers to be folded or otherwise reduced in size for conserving storage space. In practicality, while the outwardly collapsing feature allows the container to generally have a lower profile than when in the inwardly folded position, the outwardly folding feature is underutilized, as the container with outwardly folded panels is often bulky, awkward to carry, and may not nest or stack easily with like folded containers.

Furthermore, folding containers are often formed of various components, including the side panels and the base, which are molded separately. In particular, the walls typically include strengthening ribs on their outer surfaces in order to provide strength and torsional resistance to the parts. However, during the molding process, the components having ribs may be subject to slight warpage and deformation during cooling, when plastic tends to shrink. The warping may particularly occur at the edges of the parts. Under these circumstances, the parts may have lower dimensional